

The Concept Of Polyphonism And Its Comparative Interpretation In English And Uzbek Prose

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Abstract: This article explores the concept of polyphonism as developed in literary theory and investigates how it manifests across two distinct yet comparable prose traditions: English and Uzbek. Building on M. M. Bakhtin's theorization of the polyphonic novel as a dialogic field of autonomous voices, the study reconsiders polyphony not simply as a multiplicity of characters, but as a compositional principle that distributes authorial intention across heterogeneous speech types, temporal planes, and ideological stances. The research aims to show how English modernist and postmodernist prose—exemplified by James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and William Faulkner—constructs polyphony through interior monologue, free indirect discourse, and perspectival montage, while Uzbek prose—from Abdulla Qodiriy and Cho'lpon to O'tkir Hoshimov, Tog'ay Murod, and Pirimqul Qodirov—realizes a cognate multi-voicedness through layered narrators, embedded oral registers, and dialogic confrontations of tradition and modernity. Methodologically, the article employs comparative close reading aligned with narratological tools drawn from Genette, Cohn, and Rimmon-Kenan, attending to focalization, discourse modes, and the distribution of ideological authority. The results indicate both convergences and divergences: English texts tend to radicalize subjectivity and temporal fragmentation to achieve polyphony, whereas Uzbek prose often integrates social polyglossia and cultural memory to orchestrate dialogic plurality within a more overtly ethical frame. The conclusion argues for a flexible, culturally sensitive definition of polyphonism that accounts for typological overlap while respecting each tradition's specific historical and linguistic ecology.

Keywords: Polyphony; dialogism; comparative poetics; English modernism; Uzbek prose; focalization; free indirect discourse; narrative voice; cultural memory.

Introduction: The term “polyphony” entered novel theory most decisively through M. M. Bakhtin's analysis of Dostoevsky, where it names a compositional order predicated on the co-presence of autonomous consciousnesses that resist subsumption under a monologic authorial ideology. In subsequent decades, the concept has expanded beyond its Russian context to illuminate a wide range of narrative practices that stage plural, sometimes incommensurate points of view. Yet polyphony has often been treated as synonymous with mere plurality, a slippage that risks flattening its theoretical precision. As Bakhtin insists, multi-voicedness entails an ethics of discourse: characters are not simply represented but allowed to speak in voices endowed with semantically authoritative horizons. The novelist becomes a

composer of voices rather than a ventriloquist.

This article revisits polyphonism as a poetics of composition and interpretation, focusing on how it is mobilized within two literary ecologies: English prose, particularly modernist and postmodernist experiments, and Uzbek prose, whose twentieth-century evolutions articulate the tensions of nation, language, and modernization. The comparison is productive because both traditions have negotiated profound cultural transitions—industrial modernity and imperial aftermath in the Anglophone world; colonial rupture, Soviet transformation, and post-independence reconfiguration in Central Asia—while cultivating distinct linguistic resources, oral inheritances, and narrative conventions. The hypothesis is that polyphony travels across languages

not as a fixed template but as a modifiable principle that adapts to local discursive economies and aesthetic priorities. By reading representative texts through shared narratological lenses, we can clarify what is typologically common and what is irreducibly specific.

The study seeks to articulate a precise, operational definition of polyphonism applicable to both English and Uzbek prose, and to trace its compositional modulations across selected works. Specifically, it aims to identify how narrative voice, focalization, and discourse modes are orchestrated to produce dialogic plurality; to evaluate the roles of temporal construction and spatial organization in sustaining multi-voicedness; and to determine how cultural memory, ethical positioning, and social polyglossia inflect polyphonic design in each tradition. The broader goal is to propose a comparative poetics that neither universalizes modernist techniques nor provincializes non-Anglophone practices.

The corpus comprises emblematic English novels—Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*, and Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*—and central Uzbek works—Abdulla Qodiriy’s *O’tkan kunlar*, Cho’lpon’s *Kecha va kunduz*, O’tkir Hoshimov’s *Dunyoning ishlari*, Tog’ay Murod’s *Otamdan qolgan dalalar*, and Pirmuqol Qodirov’s *Yulduzli tunlar*. These choices capture a spectrum of techniques: stream-of-consciousness, montage, free indirect style, chronotopic layering, embedded storytelling, and the integration of oral registers. The method is comparative close reading, guided by narratology. From Genette we adopt distinctions among voice, mood, and temporal order; from Cohn, tools to parse interior monologue and psycho-narration; from Rimmon-Kenan, categories of focalization and reliability. Bakhtin furnishes the conceptual horizon: dialogism and the polyphonic novel.

Analytically, the study examines how each text distributes discourse across characters, narrators, and implied author; how speech and thought modes shift; how narrative time fragments or consolidates; and how social heteroglossia enters the verbal fabric. Contextualization attends to linguistic ecology—English’s global spread and stratified registers; Uzbek’s interaction with Persianate, Turkic, and Russian layers—and to historical frames that shape thematic dialogics: colonial aftermath, urban modernity, nation-building, and ethical debates around tradition.

Revisiting Bakhtin’s insights illuminates a crucial distinction: polyphony is not a synonym for complexity but a structural ethic that rebalances authority among discourses. In English modernism, Joyce’s *Ulysses* epitomizes this redistribution by staging a city-as-text

whose chapters mutate style and voice, from newspaper headlines to catechetical Q&A. The polyphonic effect emerges from perpetual stylistic re-voicing, where social registers and literary idioms compete for semantic primacy. The author’s control is paradoxically felt as an orchestration of centrifugal forces that refuse final synthesis. Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* achieves polyphony through the subtle relay of consciousness across Clarissa, Septimus, and a constellation of minor figures, using free indirect discourse to hover between narrator and character. The effect is a polyphony of sensibilities rather than ideologies, yet it retains Bakhtin’s ethical demand by allowing marginal, traumatized, or dissonant perspectives to shape the day’s fabric. Faulkner radicalizes the principle in *The Sound and the Fury* by making voice a temporal and cognitive problem; competing sections do not correct one another in a monologic progression but generate an asynchronous polyphony where meaning is always deferred, contested, and contingent.

Uzbek prose encounters polyphony in a different historical key. Qodiriy’s *O’tkan kunlar* constructs dialogic plurality by juxtaposing reformist and traditionalist discourses in a transitional Bukhara-Tashkent milieu. Its narrator, while ethically engaged, opens a discursive space in which characters’ arguments—about love, marriage, social order, and sovereignty—resonate with genuine autonomy. Polyphony here serves a restorative function: it reimagines the social body through competing rhetorical frames, including religious, customary, and emergent modernist vocabularies. Cho’lpon’s *Kecha va kunduz* extends this dialogism by weaving lyrical interiority with public discourse, revealing how personal desire and national aspiration intersect. The novel’s structural oscillation between night and day, secrecy and publicity, engraves a polyphonic tension where the reader is compelled to arbitrate without authorial decree.

In late Soviet and early independence prose, Hoshimov’s *Dunyoning ishlari* creates polyphony by suturing anecdotal, confessional, and parabolic voices that circulate in a family-community sphere. The narrator often appears as both participant and listener, admitting competing moral claims. The effect recalls Bakhtin’s heteroglossia, where the everyday’s speech genres—proverbs, recollections, admonitions—compose a dialogic commons. Tog’ay Murod’s *Otamdan qolgan dalalar* amplifies this commons through the laments and boasts of rural characters whose idiomatic vitality resists homogenization. Polyphony is sustained not by textual fragmentation but by the ethical refusal to collapse multiple rural

subjectivities into a single sociological portrait. In historical fiction like Qodirov's *Yulduzli tunlar*, the clash of courtly rhetoric, folk memory, and intellectual debate yields a multi-register narrative in which historical personae argue their case, often counter-narrating official chronologies.

A comparative lens reveals convergences. Both traditions operationalize free indirect discourse to loosen authorial monopoly over character consciousness. Both rely on temporal montage to allow voices to reverberate across chapters or sections. And both foreground social heteroglossia: English novels through urban registers and professional jargons; Uzbek works through the braided idioms of oral tradition, religious discourse, and modern bureaucratic language. Yet the divergences are instructive. English modernism often radicalizes subjectivity to the point where voice becomes a laboratory for consciousness, and polyphony springs from technical experimentation with time and syntax. Uzbek prose, while not technophobic, anchors polyphony in the ethical drama of community, memory, and historical transition; the formal strategies are at the service of social hearing rather than of epistemological shock.

This difference correlates with linguistic ecology. English, a global lingua franca, supports stylistic ventriloquism across wide sociolinguistic fields, encouraging novels like *Ulysses* to metabolize journalism, catechism, romance, and scientific prose. Uzbek, with its Turkic core and deep Persianate and Arabic overlays, as well as a significant Russian contact stratum, yields another kind of heteroglossia: the friction between dialects, oral lore, religious terminology, and Soviet or post-Soviet administrative lexis. When Uzbek narrators embed proverbs, ritual phrases, or Qur'anic citations alongside bureaucratic formulas, they perform a polyphony keyed to cultural memory and moral adjudication. This is not a deficiency of formal experiment but an alternative horizon where the polyphonic novel functions as a forum in which the community listens to itself thinking.

From a narratological standpoint, focalization patterns consolidate these tendencies. Woolf's gliding focalization distributes perception in a web of urban simultaneity, while Qodiriy's and Cho'lpon's focalization often oscillates between intimate perspective and panoramic moral commentary. Free indirect discourse in English frequently dissolves the boundary between narrator and character to dramatize mental eventfulness; in Uzbek prose, it more often mediates between personal experience and an ethically resonant narratorial wisdom, a voice that remembers as it recounts. The result is a difference in ideological authority: English texts foreground

interpretive undecidability, whereas Uzbek texts tend to allow a modulated, dialogically sensitive authorial stance to persist, one that refuses dogma yet guides recognition.

Time and space—what Bakhtin calls the chronotope—also modulate polyphony. Mrs Dalloway binds voices within a single day in London, where simultaneity is the engine of multi-voicedness. *The Sound and the Fury* breaks chronology to stage temporal polyphony, with each section's time logic constituting a voice. In *O'tkan kunlar*, the spatial movement between urban centers and domestic enclosures frames debates about custom and reform, making geography a mediator of discourse. *Otamdan qolgan dalalar* cultivates an agrarian chronotope where seasons, fields, and kinship obligations shape who may speak and when, creating a cadence of testimony, rumination, and argument that is no less polyphonic for being rural.

These patterns suggest a working definition adequate to both traditions: polyphonism is a compositional principle by which the novel distributes semantic and ethical authority among heterogeneous voices, discourses, and temporalities such that no single horizon can conclusively totalize meaning. How each tradition achieves this distribution depends on available stylistic technologies and cultural imperatives. English prose often exploits syntactic innovation and interiority to decentralize authority; Uzbek prose commonly mobilizes social polyglossia, memory practices, and dialogic narration to the same end. Rather than a hierarchy between "formalist" and "ethical" polyphony, we should recognize complementary routes to dialogic art.

At the level of interpretation, this redefinition carries consequences. Critics trained on Anglophone modernism may overlook polyphony in texts that preserve a discernible narratorial ethos; yet dialogic plurality can thrive within guidance, provided other voices retain argumentative dignity. Conversely, readings of English novels that privilege thematic plurality without attending to micro-stylistic shifts risk missing how polyphony is painstakingly fabricated at the sentence level. A comparative poetics of polyphony must therefore oscillate between macro-ethical and micro-stylistic analysis, between historical context and narratological form.

Finally, this study implies pedagogical and translational ramifications. In classrooms where both English and Uzbek literary histories are taught, polyphony offers a shared analytic bridge that honors local specificity while enabling cross-cultural dialogue. In translation, preserving polyphony requires attention not only to lexical meaning but to discourse types, idioms, and

prosodic cues that signal voice boundaries. Rendering proverbially charged Uzbek narration into English, or the stylistic pastiche of Ulysses into Uzbek, demands strategies that foreground dialogic relations among registers, not just semantic equivalence. The ethics of polyphony thus extends beyond composition and interpretation into the practical work of cultural mediation.

Polyphonism, understood as the distribution of semantic and ethical authority among autonomous voices, is a robust comparative tool for reading English and Uzbek prose. While English modernism and its aftermath often realize polyphony through radical experiments in consciousness and temporality, Uzbek prose articulates dialogic plurality by orchestrating social heteroglossia, cultural memory, and ethically inflected narration. Both routes converge on the refusal of monologic closure. A culturally sensitive conception of polyphony should therefore be flexible enough to register technical innovation and communal resonance alike. Future research might broaden the corpus to include Anglophone postcolonial and contemporary Uzbek diaspora writing, as well as systematic stylistic analysis using corpus methods to track discourse modes and focalization patterns. Such work would refine our understanding of how polyphony adapts across languages, epochs, and media while preserving its core commitment to a plural ethics of storytelling.

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